

Approved For Release 2004/09/28 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000300380123-6

Letters to The Editor

Mr. Stone on Mr. Agnew and The Washington Post

For those of us in the black community of D.C. who have long felt that The Washington Post was one of the most efficient practitioners of white racism in America, the madbrained remarks of Vice President Agnew have produced an agony of conflicting loyalties.

On the one hand, we blacks are thrilled that the criticism many of us have leveled at The Washington Post as a malicious distorter of the news has finally received a respectable forum. On the other hand, that criticism has emanated from a man whom we consider as inimical to black survival as Hitler was to the Jews. In fact, it is not hyperbolic to suggest that Spiro T. Agnew is the Joseph P. Goebbels of the Nixon administration.

Not only does Mr. Agnew seek to control the press in America, but he is attempting to mold it in an image more lily-white, more conservative, more favorable to his warped mentality and more conducive to governmental manipulation. For Mr. Agnew, the great sin of the American press, especially The Washington Post, is that it has had the audacity to report the turbulence of social change. Dissent, he implies, must be smothered and editorial heterogeneity is to be disdained for pro-administration homophones, with this crude Cyrano de Bergerac at the conductor's stand. Yet, somewhere in the wilderness of Agnew's incredibly irresponsible logorrhea lie shrubs of truth, none of which he would accept or admit because they are not consonant with his racist self-conception.

In its reporting of and its relationship with the black community of Washington, The Washington Post has played the role of the white plantation master, alone deciding what its editorial satrapy construed to be best for D.C. blacks, singularly deciding whom it should anoint as the "Negro leaders," how fast the black community should and could achieve liberation, who its allies should be and what strategies the black community should adopt.

Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins and Sterling Tucker are never criticized, but Adam Clayton Powell, Julius Hobson and the Rev. Douglas Moore have been ruthlessly subjected to an intemperate barrage of editorial assaults.

For many years, The Post's Ben Gilbert, more recently Ben Bradlee, and now to the dismay of the black community an even more anti-black Southerner, Mr. Patterson, have been molding pre-ordained images of certain black leaders. An outstanding example which would make for an interesting case study in distorted journalism has been the protective campaign on behalf of Sterling Tucker as the citadel of moderation who is supposed to control the black com-

munity for the economic benefits of The Washington Post and its associated business interests. For years, The Washington Post stoutly defended and protected John Duncan in the Commissioner's office, despite the fact that this city was escalating toward racial polarization. Now it is practicing the same kind of loving news management of Walter Washington, an embarrassingly ineffective and inept public official.

What's more, The Post has now begun to support the new politics of repression. Mr. Agnew apparently does not realize how much he and The Washington Post have in common in their sub rosa hope for the establishment of concentration camps for black people.

But it is among its columnists that The Washington Post achieves its highest level of white racism. With a proliferation of regular columnists who offer varying and conflicting views of American society, The Post, in its smug sanctuary of white supremacy, has burdened the black community with just one regular Negro columnist who is supposed to reflect the wide divergency, the rapidly changing patterns and the selectivity of political options within the black community. Since we were taught all our lives that white people were smarter than black people, I find it difficult to understand why The Post would recognize the need to have a stable of Alsop, Kraft, Evans and Novak, White, Anderson, Mankiewicz and Braden, and Buchwald, but ignore that same need for the black community with a Raspberry who is supposed to speak for all 600,000 of us.

Eventually, a required course in American colleges and universities will be "The Impact of the White Press in Molding the Image of the Black Man." In that course, as is true of my course in "Black Politics," The Washington Post will be required reading as representative of the white racism dominating the American press. The very fact that the black community has become especially hostile to the press in barring it from meetings should be recognition on your part that something is wrong. Yet you have refused to even consider remedies for this unfortunate state of affairs.

In writing this criticism, I remain disturbed and unsettled that anything I say or may say places me within an ideological million miles of the political morosity of a Spiro Agnew. But I would hope I can safely make the distinction that despite my strong disenchantment with The Washington Post which has been reflected in editorials when I was editor of the Washington Afro-American and more recently in letters to the editor (most of which, of course, your sassy editorial bigots don't print anyway), I do continue to believe that Mr. Agnew and I

have nothing, absolutely nothing, in common except our American passports.

What frightens me is that in its instinctive fear of government controls and public retribution, The Washington Post will implicitly become more racist. It will move toward the Spiro Agnew's, the DAR and the Mayor Richard Daleys—even the Joel T. Broyhills! The symbiotic trend toward a repressive psychology in this country will be inadvertently endorsed by The Washington Post in an effort to win back the Agnews—with whom The Post has far more in common than with black people.

In that bleak social development, then, and only then will my criticism and that of Spiro Agnew be distinguished. I can still be sufficiently foolish and a naive believer in this democracy that one day we will witness a more honest, a fairer, a more representative kind of reporting of the black community as an integral part of our pluralistic society than has been characteristic of The Washington Post in the past.

CHUCK STONE

John T. Dorrance Professor, Trinity College,
Hartford, Conn.